

Chapter 13 Training & Qualifications

Introduction

Agency standards for training and qualifications which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG, are coordinated through National Fire and Aviation Executive Board. Such additional standards will be approved by the Fire Directors, and implemented through the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).

Policy

It is agency policy that only qualified personnel will be assigned duties in wildland fire suppression or prescribed fire. All employees assigned dedicated fire program management responsibilities at the local, geographic area, or national level shall meet established interagency and agency competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and associated qualifications. The National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG), *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications Systems Guide* PMS 310-1 is the policy.

Requirements for fire management positions are outlined in the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide, referred to as the IFPM Standard. The supplemental Qualification Standard for professional GS - 0401 Fire Management Specialist positions, approved by the Office of Personnel Management, is also included in the IFPM Standard. The Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards and Guide can be found in its entirety on the IFPM website:

http://www.nifc.gov/training_qual/IFPM/ifpm.htm

- *FS - Standards which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG are identified in FSH 5109.17. AD hires will meet NWCG 310-1 qualification standards.*

Incident Qualification and Certifications System (IQCS)

The Incident Qualification and Certifications System (IQCS) is the fire qualifications and certification record keeping system. The master file report provided by the IQCS meets the agency requirement for maintaining fire qualification records. The system is designed to provide managers at the local, state/regional, and national levels with detailed qualification, experience, and training information needed to certify employees in wildland fire positions. The IQCS is a tool to assist managers in certification decisions, however, it does not replace the manager's responsibility to validate that employees meet all requirements for position performance based on standards.

A hard copy file folder will be kept for each employee. The contents will include, but are not limited to: training records for all agency required courses, evaluations from assignments, position Task Book verification, yearly updated IQCS forms, and Responder Master Record (RPTC028) from IQCS.

Release Date: January 2005

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1 All records will be stored and/or destroyed in accordance with agency policies.

- 2 • **BLM** - *These policies can be found at:*

3 *www.blm.gov/nhp/records/blmgrs/subject.html*

4

5 **Certification of Non-Agency Personnel**

6 Non-agency firefighters will be certified by state or local fire departments.

7 Agencies will not assist in the administration, or sponsor the work capacity test
8 (WCT), as the certifying agency.

9

10 **The Incident Qualifications and Certification Card (Red Card)**

11 The Agency Administrator (or delegate) is responsible for annual certification of
12 all agency and Administrative Determined (AD) personnel serving in wildland
13 and prescribed fire positions. Agency certification is issued annually in the form
14 of an Interagency Incident Qualification Card (Red Card), which certifies that
15 the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position. The Red Card must
16 be reviewed for accuracy and signed by the Agency Administrator or delegated
17 official. The Agency Administrator, fire manager, and individual are
18 responsible for monitoring medical status, fitness, training, performance, and for
19 taking appropriate action to ensure the employee meets all position performance
20 requirements.

21

22 Training, medical screening, and successful completion of the appropriate WCT
23 must be properly accomplished. All Red Cards issued to agency employees,
24 with the exception of EFF-paid or temporary employees at the FFT2 level, will
25 be printed using the IQCS. Red Cards issued to EFF or temporary employees at
26 the FFT2 level may be printed at the local level without use of the IQCS.

27

28 Each agency will designate employees at the national, regional/state, and local
29 levels as Fire Qualifications Administrators, who ensure all incident experience,
30 incident training, and position Task Books for employees within the agency are
31 accurately recorded in the IQCS. All records must be updated annually or
32 modified as changes occur.

33

34 Red Card certification will have a 12-month currency.

35

36 **Qualification System**

37

38 **Minimum Training Requirements**

39 All personnel filling ICS positions on the fireline must have completed a
40 minimum of 32 hours of basic wildland fire training, including the modules on
41 basic firefighting, basic fire behavior, and standards for survival.

- 42 • **NPS** - *It is NPS policy that two or more assignments be experienced after*
43 *completing a Position Task Book, and receiving certification, before an*
44 *individual begins movement to the next higher level. It is also NPS policy*
45 *to require two or more qualified assignments be experienced in a position*

before an individual may become a position performance evaluator.

Exceptions to this should be rare and well founded.

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training is required for all personnel participating in fire suppression or prescribed fire activities who may be subject to assignments on the fireline. Any unescorted visitors must meet the requirements specified in Chapter 06 of this volume. Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training must include the following core topics:

- **Entrapments** - Use training and reference materials to study the risk management process (as identified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide) and rules of engagement (e.g., LCES, 10, 18, Look Up, Look Down, Look Around).
- **Current Issues** - Review and discuss identified “hot topics” and “national emphasis topics” including the “Do the Right Thing” video. Review forecasts and assessments for the upcoming fire season and discuss implications for firefighter safety.
- **Fire Shelter** - Review and discuss last resort survival. Conduct “hands-on” fire shelter inspections. Practice shelter deployments in applicable crew/module configurations. No “live fire” exercises for the purpose of fire shelter deployment training will be conducted.
- **Other Hazards and Safety Issues** - Choose additional hazard and safety subjects, which could include SAFENET, current safety alerts, site/unit specific safety issues and hazards.

These core topics must be sufficiently covered to ensure that personnel are aware of safety concerns and procedures and can demonstrate proficiency in fire shelter deployment. The minimum refresher training hour requirements for each agency is identified below. Training time may be extended in order to effectively complete this curriculum or to meet local training requirements.

- **BLM** - 4 hours
- **FWS** - 8 hours
- **NPS** - 8 hours
- **FS** - 8 hours

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training will have a 12-month currency.

A web site, WWW http://www.nifc.gov/safety_study/index.htm, titled “Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR)” is available to assist in this training.

- **FS** - *The Incident Complexity Analysis found in Appendix M will be shared with all Type 3, 4, & 5 Incident Commanders. Review of this guide should be a part of your annual refresher training.*

Entrapment avoidance and deployment protocols have been revised and issued in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide* (PMS No. 461/NFES No.1077). The

1 guide contains a specific “Risk Management Process”, and “Last Resort
2 Survival Checklist”. An *Incident Pocket Response Guide* will be issued to every
3 fireline supervisor.

5 **Non-NWCG Agencies’ Qualifications**

6 Personnel from other agencies who do not subscribe to the NWCG qualification
7 standards may be used on agency managed fires. However, agency fire
8 managers must ensure these individuals are only assigned to duties
9 commensurate with their abilities, agency qualifications, and equipment
10 capabilities.

12 **Qualification and Certification Process**

13 Each unit with fire management responsibilities will establish a Red Card
14 qualification and certification process. In areas cooperating with other federal,
15 state, or local agencies, an interagency qualification and certification committee
16 should include representatives from each unit. These qualification and
17 certification committees provide management oversight and review of the
18 wildland and prescribed fire positions under their jurisdiction. The committee
19 also:

- 20 • Ensures that qualifications generated by IQCS or other agency systems for
21 employees are valid by reviewing the training and experience of each
22 employee.
- 23 • Evaluates if each employee possesses the personal characteristics
24 necessary to perform the wildland and prescribed fire positions in a safe
25 and efficient manner.
- 26 • Makes recommendations to the appropriate Agency Administrator or
27 designee who is responsible for final certification signature.
- 28 • Develops interagency training needs and sponsors courses that can be
29 offered locally.
- 30 • Ensures training nominees meet minimum requirements for attending
31 courses.

33 **Physical Fitness**

35 **Physical Fitness and Conditioning**

36 Agency Administrators are responsible for ensuring the overall physical fitness
37 of firefighters. The Agency Administrator may authorize employees who are
38 available and/or serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions that require a
39 physical fitness rating of arduous, one hour each day for fitness condition. All
40 other wildland firefighting personnel may be authorized up to three hours per
41 week of duty time for fitness conditioning. Furthermore, individuals who have a
42 position with an arduous physical requirement may be periodically tested during
43 the fire season to ensure they are retaining the required level of fitness and
44 conditioning.

- 1 Fitness conditioning periods may be identified and structured to include aerobic
2 and muscular exercises. Team sports are not authorized for fitness conditioning.
3 Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *Fitness and Work Capacity, 2nd ed. (1997)*, provide
4 excellent guidance concerning training specifically for the pack test, aerobic
5 fitness programs, and muscular fitness training.
- 6 • **FS** - Forest Service direction is found in FSH 5109.17.

8 **Work Capacity Tests (WCTs)**

10 **Work Capacity Tests**

11 The agencies have adopted the NWCG approved Work Capacity Tests (WCT)
12 as the official method of assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. See
13 “*Work Capacity Tests for Wildland Firefighters, Test Administrator’s Guide*”
14 PMS 307, NFES 1109.

16 WCTs are administered annually to all employees, including ADs and
17 emergency hires, who will be serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions
18 that require a fitness level. The currency for the WCT is 12 months.

20 Administration of the WCT and certification of non-agency firefighters is
21 prohibited for liability reasons. Potential emergency firefighters who would be
22 hired under AD Emergency Hire authority by the agency must be in AD pay
23 status or sign an agency-specific volunteer services agreement when given the
24 WCT.

26 Personnel taking the WCT will only complete the level of testing (Pack, Field,
27 Walk) required by the highest fitness level identified for a position on their Red
28 Card.

30 Agency Administrators (or delegates) are responsible for ensuring that the
31 Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ) is administered prior to initiating a physical
32 training program and/or the WCT.

34 Agency Administrators for offices who have implemented the *Interagency*
35 *Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards* (or delegates) are
36 responsible for ensuring that medical clearance is given for each
37 employee/incumbent prior to administering the WCT.

39 Test results must also be entered in the IQCS annually to update the fitness level
40 and date that will appear on the Red Card. Physical fitness dates entered in
41 IQCS will reflect the date the employee passed the fitness test. The information
42 on this health screen is considered confidential and must be filed in the
43 employee’s Official Medical File.

1 WCT Retesting

2 Those who do not pass the WCT will be provided another opportunity to retest.
 3 Employees will have to wait at least 48 hours before retaking the WCT. If an
 4 employee sustains an injury (verified by a licensed medical provider) during a
 5 test, the test will not count as an attempt. Once an injured employee has been
 6 released for full duty, the employee will be given time to prepare for the test (not
 7 to exceed 4 weeks). The number of retesting opportunities that will be allowed
 8 include:

- 9 • Three opportunities for permanent employees required to pass a test for
 10 duties in the fire program.
- 11 • One opportunity for temporary employees required to pass a test (a second
 12 chance maybe provided at the discretion of fire management).
- 13 • *FS - The Forest Service also uses the WCT as the official method of*
 14 *assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. The specific direction,*
 15 *Implementation Guide, Health Screen Questionnaire, and required*
 16 *processes can be found at the following web site:*
 17 *www.fs.fed.us/fire/fire_new/.*

19 WCT Categories

20 The NWCG Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, 310-1
 21 identifies WCTs for agency specific positions. There are three fitness levels -
 22 Arduous, Moderate, and Light - which require an individual to demonstrate their
 23 ability to perform the fitness requirements of the position. Duties in the "None"
 24 category are normally performed in a controlled environment, such as an
 25 incident base.

26
 27 Any position required to be on the fireline unescorted for suppression or non-
 28 suppression tasks will be required to have passed the WCT at the "light"
 29 physical fitness level. This requirement applies even to positions which are
 30 identified in the 310-1 with a fitness level of "None."

32 Work Capacity Test

Work Category	Test	Distance	Weight	Time
Arduous	Pack Test	3 miles	45 lb.	45 min.
Moderate	Field Test	2 miles	25 lb.	30 min.
Light	Walk Test	1 mile	None	16 min.

33 **Arduous** - Duties involve field work requiring physical performance with above
 34 average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an
 35 occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under
 36 adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time.

37 Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending,
 38 and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of the work typically is set by the
 39 emergency conditions.

1 **Moderate** - Duties involve field work requiring complete control of all physical
2 faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing
3 for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping,
4 twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately
5 strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals
6 usually set their own work pace.

7 **Light** - Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity
8 characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities
9 may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of
10 work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually
11 govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

12 13 **WCT Administration**

14 An HSQ will be administered prior to initiating a physical training program
15 and/or the WCT with the following objectives:

- 16 • To identify, prior to the WCT, at-risk personnel.
- 17 • To identify existing injuries or illness and minimize the probability of new
18 injuries.
- 19 • To establish the need for a medical examination (see Medical
20 Examinations criteria below).

21 A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) shall be developed and approved for each field
22 office prior to administering the WCT. See the sample JHA found in Appendix
23 X.

24 Administer the test using the JHA as a briefing guide. Document using the HSQ
25 Appendix W and WCT Record (see Appendix Y. These documents must be
26 retained until the next testing.

- 27 • ***NPS** - For those parks that experience severe winter conditions and must
28 test personnel during those conditions, work capacity testing may be
29 conducted using industrial grade treadmills. This least-preferred option
30 should only be considered when all other indoor facilities are unavailable
31 (gyms, indoor tracks, malls etc.), and requires Regional Fire Management
32 Officer approval. For safety reasons, these treadmills must have suitable
33 handrails and kill-switches, preferably switches physically attached to the
34 user via a cord. The Job Hazard Analysis must address all possible
35 balance/fall mitigations. Specific questions are answered in the "Work
36 Capacity Administrators Guide" (PMS 307,NFES 1109).*

37 38 **Health Screen Questionnaire HSQ**

39 The purpose is to identify individuals who may be at risk in preparing for and
40 completing the WCT, which may result in a recommended exercise program
41 and/or medical examination.

42
43 Title 5 CFR Part 339 – Medical Qualification Determinations, which provides a
44 determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty, authorizes solicitation of this
45 information. The HSQ can be found in Appendix W.

1 The information on the HSQ is considered confidential and once reviewed by
2 the test administrator to determine if the WCT can be administered, it must be
3 kept in the employee's OPF medical file. This file may only be viewed by
4 Human Resource Management (HRM) or Safety personnel and the identity of
5 the individual must be protected.

6
7 Solicitation of this information is authorized by Title 5 U.S. Code Section 3301,
8 which provides for a determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty.

9 10 **Work Capacity Test (WCT) Record**

11 Units will document the administration of the WCT to all employees and job
12 applicants. This documentation must be retained until the next WCT is
13 administered. Units may also be requested to provide data from these records to
14 assist in the evaluation of the WCT process.

15 16 **Medical Examinations**

17 Agency Administrators and supervisors are responsible for the occupational
18 health and safety of their employees performing wildland and prescribed fire
19 activities, and may require employees to take a medical examination at any time.

20
21 Established medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 CFR 339, provide
22 consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees
23 whose work may subject them or others to significant health and safety risks due
24 to occupational or environmental exposure or demand.

25
26 The new Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification
27 Standards continue to be implemented throughout the DOI and FS
28 organizations. Those units who have not yet implemented the new standards
29 must continue to comply with the current standards as stated below until
30 implementation of the new standards is accomplished.

31
32 Where Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards are implemented no
33 person will be employed as an arduous duty fire fighter under AD/EFF hiring
34 authority if they have:

- 35 • failed to gain clearance through the Interagency Wildland Firefighters
36 Medical Standards Program under any pay authority, or:
- 37 • personal knowledge of any physical reason that would prohibit them from
38 carrying out arduous duties, or:
- 39 • medical professional's advice of any physical reason that would prohibit
40 them from carrying out the duties of a wildland firefighter.

41
42 All employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring
43 a fitness level (Arduous, Moderate, Light) must answer all the questions on the
44 HSQ prior to taking their WCT.

1 The information on any medical records is considered confidential and must be
2 kept in the employee's medical file.

3
4 All permanent, career-seasonal, temporary, and Student Career Experience
5 Program (SCEP) employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire
6 activities requiring a fitness level of Arduous must have a current medical
7 examination prior to attempting the WCT. Thereafter, employees 40 years of
8 age and older must have a physical every three years or as indicated by the
9 Health Screen Questionnaire.

- 10 • **NPS** - *see RM-18, Chapter 3 and NPS exceptions below.*

11
12 Stress EKGs are not required as part of the medical examination and will only
13 be approved if recommended and administered by the medical exam physician.

14
15 If any "Yes" answer is indicated, a medical examination is required prior to the
16 employee taking the WCT or if there is a known pre-existing medical condition
17 that is already being monitored under medical care (e.g., high blood pressure), a
18 medical clearance statement will be provided by the physician prior to taking
19 WCT.

- 20 • **FWS** - *All permanent employees over 40 years of age who take the pack
21 or field test to qualify for a wildland or prescribed fire position are
22 required to take an annual physical examination before taking the test.*
- 23 • **NPS** - *"Wildland Firefighter" Defined: Those employees who perform
24 duties of a hazardous and/or strenuous nature are targeted. Therefore,
25 within this section, "wildland firefighter" hereinafter refers to an
26 employee whose wildland fire position(s) qualifications require an
27 "Arduous" fitness level, as defined in the current PMS 310-1 "Wildland
28 and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide."*
- 29 • **NPS** - *For health and fitness purposes, those who are fire-qualified at less
30 than the Arduous fitness level are not required to meet the mandatory
31 fitness program requirements of DO-57 for wildland fire management.
32 However, they are strongly encouraged to participate in the voluntary
33 fitness program, and must still meet physical fitness/work capacity
34 requirements as outlined in 310-1 "Wildland and Prescribed Fire
35 Qualification System Guide" for positions with Moderate and Light fitness
36 requirements.*
- 37 • **NPS** - *Health Screening: Arduous duty medical exams must be taken once
38 every 3 years by wildland firefighters. They do not include stress EKGs,
39 except for those 41 years or older if required by the examining physician.
40 Those cases would be considered exceptional. FIREPRO funding will not
41 be used to pay for stress EKGs, except in exceptional cases, which require
42 prior approval by the regional fire management officer.*
- 43 • **NPS** - *FIREPRO funding may be used to pay for medical exams for
44 mandatory fitness program participants within the following limits:*

- 1 • *NPS - Those who meet the definition of “wildland firefighter” will have*
2 *costs of all required medical examinations paid for by FIREPRO, not to*
3 *exceed \$350. Anything in excess of \$350 requires approval of the regional*
4 *fire management officer. This includes recent requirements for blood*
5 *screenings.*
- 6 • *NPS - In the event an employee-selected physician indicates that an EKG*
7 *or other advanced test is needed, the government may require a second*
8 *opinion from an appointed physician.*
- 9 • *NPS - Pending implementation of the federal interagency wildland*
10 *firefighter medical qualification standards in a geographic area, NPS units*
11 *will continue to use the U.S. Civil Service Commission Certificate of*
12 *Medical Exam, SF-78, Wildland Fire Medical Examination Standard, for*
13 *use by examining physicians.*
- 14 • *NPS - The examining physician will submit the completed SF-78 to the*
15 *employee’s park, where it will be reviewed by the personnel office and*
16 *retained in the employee’s Official Personnel Medical File.*
- 17 • *NPS - The law enforcement medical exam for NPS rangers, who are*
18 *collateral duty wildland firefighters, will suffice for wildland fire health*
19 *screening purposes.*
- 20 • *NPS - Employees requiring medical exams on the 3-year cycle will have*
21 *exams conducted prior to taking the Arduous fitness WCT (Pack Test).*